

AN APPRECIATION

Oswald Taylor Brown OBE, FRCP(Glasg) FRCP(Ed)

11th October 1916 -26th March 2006

Oswald Taylor Brown was affectionately known as "Ossie" to all his friends, colleagues, acquaintances and family. His schooldays were spent at Glasgow High School and at Strathallan School. Medical studies at Glasgow University led to his qualification in the fateful summer of 1939. With German successes early in the war dominating the European scene, the United Kingdom settled into the mobilisation of a "nation at arms", and Ossie volunteered for active service. As a Squadron Leader in the Royal Air Force, he crossed to France with the invasion forces on D Day + 6. He served through France and into Germany until the end of the war in 1945. He was "mentioned in dispatches" on 3 occasions and was demobilised in 1946.

He joined the unit of Professor Noah Morris who held the Chair of what at that time was known as "materia medica". Morris however was a far-seeing academic who saw that demographic changes made it inevitable that competently organised and led services for the ageing population should be set up by young active physicians. He knew of the pioneering work of Dr Marjory Warren at the West Middlesex Hospital, and sent Ossie to that centre where he was deeply impressed by what he heard and saw, and as early as 1947, he decided that this field of work was to be his career. On return to Glasgow, he was appointed assistant physician at the Southern General Hospital charged with the duty of organising a "geriatric service" with appropriate diagnostic and rehabilitation staff to working that field. At that time, with the inception of the NHS in 1948, it was the case that such services were not at the forefront of planner's minds, and the long process of search for facilities in which such services could be organised began usually in hospitals which had been abandoned by other services. For years, work in this field called for a high degree of dedication, and Ossie was appointed to the first consultant physician post in geriatric medicine in Scotland, in 1951 in Tayside, Perth and Angus. Further consultant posts in geriatric medicine were created in Glasgow (1952), in Aberdeen (1955), in Fife (1956) and in Edinburgh (1958). For the next 25

years, Ossie was the "fons et origo" of services in Tayside and the essential teaching functions of those early in the field were recognised when he was appointed Honorary Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine at St Andrews University - later changed to the University of Dundee. Under his leadership, services steadily improved with the support of the most enlightened administrative and academic staffs. It has been well said that the hour brings forth the man. Forward looking, persistently original in thought, and technical ability with an emollient sense of humour - that was Ossie; willing to push constantly for a share of the inadequate resources available at the time and service - that was Ossie. He realised early on, that to place the sick and disabled old in competition with the young and "eternally acute" was a recipe for continuous neglect. All the early physicians in geriatric medicine knew that poor diagnostic and rehabilitation services would continue the inert "work housing" of ill old people in the "chronic wards" of old hospitals and poorhouses. Ossie was one of these physicians and is therefore remembered as teacher, physician and an original architect of Scotland's geriatric services, as was recognised by the OBE awarded to him in 1969.

Married for 58 years, he is survived by his wife, Agnes, - also a medical graduate - who supported his work, and who cared for him when illness and disability took their toll. Their son, David, a consultant anaesthetist at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, and their daughter, Elizabeth, a teaching fellow at St. Andrews University, and clinical assistant in drug development in Dundee complete the medical dynasty.

C P L